



Today's sermon is going to be a bit different than usual. I'm not sure if anyone has ever given a sermon on coffee before, but that's what we're going to talk about. Because there's quite a lot you can learn about Christianity from Coffee, believe it or not. At least you can't say you've "heard it all before" with this sermon subject!

Let's look at 7 spiritual lessons we can learn from coffee.

1. Coffee is all about relationships! And so is Christianity. We always have a cup of tea or coffee after services, and the main reason for that is that it is a time to relax, talk, chat, fellowship together.

One of the main ways people get together and forge relationships is to have a cup of tea or coffee together. "Let's do coffee," they say. People don't go to cafés on their own; they go with a friend, or with a co-worker, or even for job interviews, etc. Cafés are the place for meetings these days. Coffee connects people and helps people connect. It fosters relationships between people.

God wants to have relationships with us. That's what Christianity is all about.

John 17:3 brings out that principle. <sup>3</sup>"Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."

At the NZCN Congress I went to in Wellington recently, we had a presentation on Maori culture and how we would love more Maoris to become Christians. Afterwards they had a Q & A session, and someone asked the question "How is the best way for us Pakehas to step into the Maori world? What is the best first step we can take to communicate with Maoris?" The answer from a Maori presenter was simply "a cup of coffee."



Have a cup of coffee with them – i.e. get to know someone, enter a relationship with them. That is such a simple but big key to solving conflict, and understanding one another: have a coffee together!

2. The inside of the cup is more important than the outside. What is in the cup is more important than the cup itself.

*An old professor once offered his students a large pot of coffee and an assortment of cups; pottery, plastic, glass, some plain-looking and some expensive. He told them to help themselves. When all the students had a cup of coffee in hand, the lecturer said "If you noticed, all the nice-looking, expensive cups were taken up, leaving behind the plain and cheap ones. While it is normal for you to want only the best for yourselves, that is the source of your problems and stress. What all of you really wanted was coffee, not the cup, but you consciously went for the better cups and are eyeing each other's cups."*  
*"Now, if Life is coffee, then the jobs, money and position in society are the cups. They are just tools to hold and contain Life, but the quality of life doesn't change. Sometimes, by concentrating only on the cup, we fail to enjoy the coffee in it."*

Isn't it true: who really cares what the cup looks like? It's the taste and quality of coffee inside that really matters! The cup stands for material things – it's the spirit inside that matters.

Matthew 23:27 shows this principle:

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean."

Ephesians 3:16-17A "I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." It's what's inside us that matters.

1 Samuel 16:7 "But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

Another principle along this line is that although we can be all different types of cups, or people, black, white, men, women, nevertheless we are all of one blood. What is inside us is what is important.

Similarly, when we become Christians we all receive the one Spirit, the Holy Spirit, which is like our spiritual life blood.

1 Corinthians 12:13 "For we were all baptised by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink." We drink the Holy Spirit, like we drink coffee!

Acts 2:17 "'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams." The Holy Spirit is poured out, just like coffee. Notice what happens when people receive the Holy Spirit – a bit like the stimulation of coffee!

2 Timothy 1:6 (NKJV) "Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands." The gift of God (the Holy Spirit) is something that can be "stirred up." There are a number of similarities between the Holy Spirit and coffee, which brings us to point 3:

3. Coffee wakes us up! It is a stimulant, well recognised as a wake-up tonic. The Holy Spirit wakes us up too. As Christians we should be awake, alert and lively.

Isaiah 51:17(NKJV) “Awake, awake! Stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of His fury; you have drunk the dregs of the cup of trembling, and drained it out.” ‘The cup of trembling’ could be talking about coffee, which makes some people feel nervy and twitchy!

Ephesians 5:14, 18 <sup>14</sup>“This is why it is said: “Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” <sup>18</sup>“Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit” We are encouraged to wake up!

1 Thessalonians 5:4-6 <sup>4</sup>“But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. <sup>5</sup> You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. <sup>6</sup> So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober.” Coffee is the best beverage for this.

Proverbs 6:9-11 <sup>9</sup>“How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? <sup>10</sup> A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest— <sup>11</sup> and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man.” Coffee is drunk to wake us up in the morning.

4. Lukewarm coffee is terrible. People enjoy hot coffee, and also iced coffee. So it can be hot or cold, but not lukewarm. That’s the way Christians should be too.

Revelation 3:15-16 <sup>15</sup>“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! <sup>16</sup> So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.”

Here’s a quote from an article called “Decaffeinated Christianity”, by William L. Self:

*“Decaffeinated coffee may be good; I have to drink it in the evenings myself, though I don’t really like it. ‘Decaf’ coffee won’t wake you up; it won’t perk you up; it won’t keep you up; it won’t get you up; it’s just there. It looks like coffee; it smells like coffee; it tastes like coffee; it just doesn’t do for you inside what coffee ought to do. There is a form of decaffeinated Christianity in our culture and we buy into it more than we think. We go through a form of what it means to be a Christian, but we’re a little afraid to get out on the edge because we’re afraid somebody might think we’re religious fanatics. So we have decaffeinated our Christian faith, cut down the edges, smoothed the places where it has touched our lives, then we wonder why there is no power in it.”*

He makes a very good point! Christianity can be watered down – we can drop our standards to the level of those around us. We need to wake up and smell the coffee! To be filled with the power of the Spirit of God.

5. Coffee needs to be roasted and ground for any flavour to come out.



Here are some green coffee beans. They are useless for drinking! They need to be roasted at high temperature to become brown and tasty. Then the aroma starts to come out. Even then, they can’t yet be used in a cup of coffee. To be usable they have to be ground down fine.

Exodus 30:36 “Grind some of it to powder and place it in front of the ark of the covenant law in the tent of meeting, where I will meet with you. It shall be most holy to you.”

Could this refer to coffee? Of course it's talking about incense, but the grinding down pictures trials. The roasting and grinding is a picture of the trials Christians have to go through. If we didn't go through trials, we wouldn't be very useful Christians. There are many scriptures on this – let's just look at one today:

Job 23:10 "But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I will come forth as gold."

I like the way someone put it: "*Christians are like coffee: their real strength doesn't show up until they are in hot water.*"



6. Coffee needs to be brewed or percolated. This teaches us something about spiritual meditation. Reading God's Word is like dipping a tea bag or a coffee bag, or ground coffee, in a cup of water. Some people like their tea like that, with the water just barely turning brown. But others need it steeped for a long time, so it is strong. That's what meditation is like. The more we think about the scriptures, let them brew inside our brain, the more we gain.

The reason we have espresso machines is to really get the flavour out of the coffee by putting the coffee beans into boiling water under immense pressure, in order to extract as much flavour as possible. As the coffee colours the water, so meditation colours our thinking, so we gain more understanding and depth of God's Word and Ways.

The more you meditate, the more answers you find in God's Word – e.g:

- Q Why did God lead Israel to a land flowing with milk and honey?  
A Because they needed it for their coffee.  
Q Who makes better coffee, men or women?  
A Men, because there is a book of He-brews, not she-brews.

7. People are passionate about coffee, so we should be passionate about Christianity. I'd like to illustrate this point by looking at a book I came across recently.

Quotes from 'The Gospel According to Starbucks, (*Living with a Grande Passion*)' by Leonard Sweet.

*Page 13: "Starbucks has one of the best CEO's in the world. Howard Schultz sees himself, not as the CEO of Starbucks, but as its Chief Evangelist Officer. When he is asked to describe how he sees himself, Schultz sometimes responds "I'm a coffee evangelist."*

On Page 15 he cites some examples of other businessmen who are proud to be known as evangelists. On the other hand, Christians often don't have the desire to be evangelists!

2 Corinthians 2:14-17 <sup>14</sup>"But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. <sup>15</sup>For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. <sup>16</sup>To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life. And who is equal to such a task? <sup>17</sup>Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, as those sent from God."

Our job is to be an aroma. The aroma of coffee is great; the aroma of the gospel needs to be spread abroad.

On pages 23-25, he talks about the most expensive coffee beans in the world:

*“Costing over \$1000 per kg, the world’s most exotic bean comes from Java in Indonesia. It is called ‘Kopi Luwak’ or ‘Civet Coffee’. The civet is a type of cat like a mongoose that roams by night and picks on the most perfect, ripe coffee cherries to eat. It then passes the undigested coffee beans as faeces. The locals dig around in the forest for civet cat dung. They wash the lumps of poo until only the beans are left, and they are used to make this special coffee.”*



“God takes what is worst, least and most contemptible, and turns it into what is greatest, best and strongest. When Jesus wanted to heal a blind man, He spat and scooped up some dirt. God turns cursing into curing; belittling into blessing. The curse of being hanged on a tree was transformed into the miraculous act of forgiveness and salvation.”



He gives other examples such as – honey is bee excrement, mushrooms grow in cow poo, etc. Much of the book is about Starbucks, or as he breaks it down: “St Arbucks”! We can learn a lot of spiritual lessons from the way Starbucks treats clients. Having a cup of coffee is transformed into a warm, welcoming experience.

I’ll conclude with a final example he gives on Page 65:

*“I dare you to try something. Go into any Starbucks, stand at the counter, and say these words: “A cup of coffee, please.” Watch what happens next. The whole place comes to a screeching halt. No one knows how to deal with you. You have thrown the ultimate monkey wrench into the inner workings of the system. Your monkey wrench is also a money wrench because thinking of Starbucks as a place to get a cup of coffee would be disastrous to their bottom line. Now try ordering again. This time ask for my signature drink: a double tall skim latte extra hot. Place the order and watch what happens next. The whole place lights up. Suddenly everyone and everything starts humming with activity. Your cup is personalized, its six boxes tattooed with your peculiar preferences.”*

Possibly people are too afraid to go into Starbucks because they wouldn’t know what to order! I think it is definitely possible that new people are scared to come to Church because they wouldn’t understand our jargon and wouldn’t know how to act. We need to be down to earth with people and try to see things from their viewpoint.

Well, those are some of the lessons we can learn from coffee. Let’s look in closing at Psalm 23:5. “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.”

“My cup overflows” is a way of saying “I have more blessings than I need.” Sometimes this applies to coffee, but it always applies to a grateful Christian who counts their spiritual blessings!

So I hope you are now full of beans and ready to go back and face the daily grind. If you have any questions about what I've covered today, let's talk about it over a hot cup of coffee!

